



General Assembly

Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
8 December 2006

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 24th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 22 November 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Yousfi (Algeria)
*Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Saha

Contents

Agenda item 139: Financing of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea

Agenda item 126: United Nations pension system (*continued*)

Agenda item 121: Pattern of conferences (*continued*)

Agenda item 117: Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (*continued*)

Renovation of the residence of the Secretary-General (continued)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.



The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 139: Financing of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (A/61/521 and A/61/575)

1. **Mr. Sach** (Acting Under-Secretary-General for Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the revised budget for the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 (A/61/521), said that, following the decision of the Security Council, in its resolution 1681 (2006), to authorize reconfiguration of the Mission's military component and the decision of the General Assembly, in its resolution 60/272, to appropriate to the Special Account for the Mission funds for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007, the Mission's military personnel had been reduced from 3,404 to 2,300, and its budget had been reduced by 16.7 per cent.

2. In line with the principle of results-based budgeting, the various specific outputs of the Mission had been revised to take account of the changes in staffing and resources, as well as delayed deployment and estimated vacancy rates for national and international staff. Recalling that Member States had already been asked for assessments of \$91 million to cover the costs of the Mission until 31 December 2006, he indicated that the General Assembly was being invited to take the action described in paragraph 25 of the report of the Secretary-General, which reflected the revised appropriation, the reduced income from staff assessment and the residual unassessed costs for the Mission.

3. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/61/575), said that when the Mission prepared its financial performance report for 2005/06 and its budget for 2007/08 it should provide more information on the full effects of the reconfiguration of staffing requirements, the redeployment of posts and the relationship between the military, substantive civilian and support components, as well as details of the workload of the Conduct and Discipline Team and quick-impact projects.

4. Having requested and received information on the potential savings generated by delayed deployment of the civilian and military components of the Mission,

diesel restrictions and the Eritrean authorities' continued ban on helicopter flights, the Advisory Committee recommended that the revised estimates should be reduced by approximately \$8.1 million, but also that part of the reduction should be restored if the flight ban was lifted before 30 June 2007 and if supported by budget implementation data.

Agenda item 126: United Nations pension system
(*continued*) (A/61/9 and A/61/545; A/C.5/61/2)

5. **Mr. Sach** (Acting Under-Secretary-General for Management) said that, while the Secretariat had responded, in informal consultations held on 16 November 2006, to most of the issues raised by delegations and by the Advisory Committee at the Committee's 20th meeting, held on 10 November 2006, one matter must be further clarified. Although the Advisory Committee had supported the decision of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board and Investments Committee to endorse passive management of the Fund's North American equities portfolio, it had disagreed that such management should be outsourced, preferring the Investment Management Service to carry out that function. It had also urged a comprehensive review of the objectives, costs and timing of any new indexing approach. At its meeting on 13 November 2006, the Investments Committee, in the light of the Advisory Committee's views, had re-examined its earlier recommendations on indexation and external management of the North American equities portfolio, and had reaffirmed those recommendations. In a paper provided to the Committee in informal consultations on 20 November 2006 the Secretariat had indicated that external management would be \$625,000 per year cheaper than internal management, and was expected also to permit more precise tracking, thereby avoiding upward or downward deviations of \$30 million per year.

Agenda item 121: Pattern of conferences (*continued*)
(A/C.5/61/L.6)

Draft resolution A/C.5/61/L.6: Pattern of conferences

6. *Draft resolution A/C.5/61/L.6 was adopted.*

7. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking in explanation of position on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group attached great importance to the establishment of clear lines of accountability for the submission, processing and issuance of documentation.

Recalling that the General Assembly, in its resolution 60/236 B, had requested the Secretary-General to report to it on those matters, the Group regretted that the Committee on Conferences had been unable to make specific recommendations on improving accountability because the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/61/129) lacked sufficient detail in that regard. It trusted that the next report to the General Assembly on the pattern of conferences would include enough information to enable the Committee on Conferences to fulfil the mandate given to it in section IV, paragraph 5, of the draft resolution.

8. The Group was also concerned at the violations of the rules relating to the issuance of all parliamentary documents in all official languages. As an example, the comprehensive annual report requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/283 on investing in the United Nations for a stronger Organization worldwide had been issued and placed in the public domain in only one language, disregarding proper procedure. The Group trusted that the Bureau would resolve that matter before the Committee took up the comprehensive annual report. As a further example, the collection of data on multilateral, regional and bilateral agreements which the General Assembly had requested in paragraph 10 (a) of the Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism contained in the annex to its resolution 49/60 had been published in English and French only. The Secretariat, particularly the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, must comply fully with the mandates of the General Assembly and publish parliamentary documentation in all official languages.

9. Lastly, the Group emphasized that summary and verbatim records must be issued on time, in hard copy and simultaneously in all official languages, and looked forward to receiving more information on the progress of the integrated global management project.

Agenda item 117: Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (continued)

Renovation of the residence of the Secretary-General (continued) (A/C.5/61/L.8)

Draft resolution A/C.5/61/L.8: Renovation of the residence of the Secretary-General

10. *Draft resolution A/C.5/61/L.8 was adopted.*

11. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking in explanation of position on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group took the view that the issue of renovating the residence of the Secretary-General should have been addressed sooner in order to avoid cost escalation and to ensure that the Secretary-General and his family lived in a comfortable and safe environment.

12. Recalling that, at the Committee's 13th meeting, held on 31 October 2006, the Group had expressed its concern at the Advisory Committee's recommendation that efforts should be made to absorb the costs of the project within existing appropriations under sections 1 and 32 of the budget (A/61/523, para. 13), she indicated that the Group had approved the content of paragraph 2 of the draft resolution after being assured by the Secretariat that such efforts would not result in delays to projects already approved by the General Assembly under section 32 of the budget, and that project expenditure would be reported upon in the context of the second performance report. The group wished the Secretariat to comply with the requests made by the Committee in paragraphs 6 and 9 of the draft resolution.

13. **Ms. Pehrman** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Norway and Ukraine, expressed support for the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, trusted that every effort would be made to absorb project costs within the approved appropriations under sections 1 and 32 of the budget and looked forward to receiving details of the expenditure in the context of the second performance report on the budget for the biennium.

14. **Ms. Shah** (United States of America) said that her delegation supported the recommendations of the Advisory Committee and understood that the General Assembly, by adopting the draft resolution, would ensure that the schedule for the renovation works would be adhered to and that the project cost would be absorbed within appropriations approved under the relevant sections of the budget.

The meeting rose at 10.35 p.m.